

Preparation points

1. Ask how things are going, and make sure you listen – recruitment isn't all about talking!
2. Most social workers will work in very pressurised and stressful environments. Impress upon them the need to join UNISON in order to give them protection in the workplace.
3. Have a look at UNISON's Social Work Watch Day results to get an understanding of the main problems facing social workers (for example high caseloads, long working hours, a lack of support for newly qualified social workers) and how UNISON is campaigning to improve matters.
4. A significant number of social workers have left local councils and now work as agency workers. They still need a union.
5. Check you have some information about the benefits of joining UNISON. Remember that social workers are often very pushed for time and may be hard pushed to talk to you for any prolonged period.
6. Tell them that UNISON has been campaigning to improve how they are supported in the workplace, to have caseloads reduced and to have more resources to do their job. We have succeeded in bringing these crucial issues to national attention.
7. Have a think about some of the ways that UNISON membership has helped you, or the team you work in. Tell people about it.
8. Don't worry if you are asked a question and you don't know the answer! Try to find out the answer from someone in the UNISON branch.

SOCIAL WORKERS

A GUIDE FOR MEMBERS

Conversation points

1. UNISON is the biggest public services trade union, and the main local government union. Our local UNISON branch is run by trained workplace representatives who are local, know our employer, and work where we work.
2. UNISON negotiates across all local authorities on issues like pay and equalities. And our local branch of UNISON negotiates with our local authority on issues including holidays, sick pay, and health and safety.
3. UNISON campaigns in favour of public services, against cuts to services and job losses, and for greater equality at work and in society. UNISON's campaign priorities are set by members.
4. UNISON provides a range of other benefits for members, including access to legal advice, a helpline, and member discounts.
5. UNISON knows that you and many other social workers find your jobs very stressful – but we can provide the advice and support you need to help get your employer to implement better working practices. We also help to negotiate better training from your employer.
6. UNISON is campaigning to improve the social work system, and working conditions for social workers. We are campaigning against moves to privatise social work services and to provide more support for assistant and newly qualified social workers.
7. UNISON has been part of working with partner organizations to promote and refresh good practice in social work. One of the ways we have done this is by promoting shared core expectations and standards for employers which would enable social workers in all employment settings to work effectively.
8. We also want to see improved standards of care for service users. We want councils to ensure that social workers are able to spend less time on paperwork and more time with service users.
9. UNISON is particularly focused on the problem of high caseload levels for social workers. It is not right that many social workers have dangerously high caseload levels. We are campaigning to end this to help ensure better outcomes for service users and for social workers themselves.
10. UNISON is working with other leading social work organisations to improve how the profession is treated by the Government and to ensure they are given the recognition they deserve.
11. UNISON has a great deal of expertise in health and safety matters in the workplace which is really important for social workers who have to undertake lone working.